

Cross-Reference to Related Applications

This application claims the benefit of and incorporates by reference prior filed copending U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/464,055, filed April 21, 2003.

Summary of the Invention

This invention includes a vacuum-operated trash receptacle which is characterized in a preferred embodiment by a cylindrical container having a top flange that receives a perforated lid or cover and a cylindrical liner which is smaller in diameter and typically shorter than the container, fitted inside the container and provided with a top flange and slots or openings in the wall thereof. A trash receptacle or bag is placed inside the liner and in a first preferred embodiment an electric air blower or inflator or a vacuum pump (hereinafter called air blower) is provided in the bottom of the container and communicates with an annulus defined by the liner bottom and the container bottom and optionally, the outside liner wall and the inside container wall. This structure facilitates the development of a vacuum inside the liner and the annulus, with corresponding deployment of the wall of the trash bag against the liner to optimize opening of the trash bag to full volume inside the liner for containing trash by operation of the air blower. In a second embodiment of the invention the air blower is positioned in the side or wall of the container and communicates with the annulus between the outside liner wall and the inside container wall, to effect the same vacuum in the liner and annulus and optimum deployment of the trash bag in the liner. In a third embodiment an air blower is mounted on the inside of the lid or cover and the liner flange is omitted from the liner or is perforated, for introducing air directly into the trash bag and deploying the bag against the liner.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The invention will be better understood by reference to the following drawings wherein:

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of a first preferred embodiment of the vacuum-operated trash receptacle having a bottom-mounted air blower, with the trash bag deployed in the liner and the liner located in functional configuration inside the container;

FIGURE 2 is an exploded view of the vacuum-operated trash receptacle illustrated in FIGURE 1, more particularly illustrating the slotted liner and the trash bag, both disposed for deployment in the container;

FIGURE 3 is an inverted view, partially in section, of the bottom segment of the vacuum-operated trash receptacle illustrated in FIGURES 1 and 2, illustrating the air blower mounted in the bottom panel of the container;

FIGURE 4 is a longitudinal sectional view of the container illustrated in FIGURE 1, with the liner in place in the container and the trash bag positioned inside the liner, more particularly illustrating the connected bottom and side or wall annulus formed between the respective bottom and wall of the liner and the container for generating a vacuum inside the liner adjacent to the trash bag when the air blower is operating;

FIGURE 5 is a perspective view of a second preferred embodiment of the vacuum-operated trash receptacle, wherein the air blower is mounted in the wall of the container;

FIGURE 6 is a sectional view of the wall of the container illustrated in FIGURE 5, more particularly illustrating the wall-mounted air blower detail with the blower suction in communication with the wall annulus between the outside wall of the liner and the inside container wall; and

FIGURE 7 is a perspective view of a perforated container cover or lid fitted with a blower for introducing air directly into the trash bag and deploying the trash bag against the liner or container under circumstances where the liner flange is perforated or omitted from the liner.

Description of the Preferred Embodiments

Referring initially to FIGURES 1-4 of the drawings in a first preferred embodiment the vacuum-operated trash receptacle of this invention is generally illustrated by reference numeral 1. The vacuum-operated trash receptacle 1 is characterized by a typically cylindrical container 2, defined by a cylindrical container wall 3, fitted with a container flange 4 at the top thereof and having a round cover or lid 5, provided with lid openings 5b and optionally, with a downwardly-extending lid flange 6 deployed around the periphery of the lid panel 5a of the lid 5. The container wall 3 extends to a container bottom 8, having a container-supporting panel flange 10 extending around a bottom panel 9, to define a container interior 7, as further illustrated in FIGURE 2 of the drawings. A panel flange slot 11 is provided in the panel flange 10 of the container bottom 8 to assure a continuous flow of air to the air blower 13, having a blower suction 14 mounted in an opening provided in the bottom panel 9 of the container bottom 8, as illustrated in FIGURES 3 and 4. The blower suction 14 is characterized by a suction opening 14a that extends through the opening in the bottom panel 9, as illustrated in FIGURE 4 and communicates with a bottom annulus 28, defined by the liner bottom 24 of a liner 21 inserted in the container 2, and the bottom panel 9 of the container bottom 8. A battery container 16 is typically mounted on the bottom panel 9 adjacent to the air blower 13 and contains one or more batteries 17, having wiring 18 connected to the air blower 13 and a switch 19, according to the knowledge of those skilled in the art, for operating the air blower 13 by means of the switch 19. Alternatively, the blower 13 and switch 19 can be wired for 115-volt household current or the like, as desired. The liner 21 is characterized by a cylindrical liner wall 22 which is typically smaller in diameter than the container wall 3 of the container 2, to facilitate a wall annulus 29, that typically connects to the bottom annulus 28, as further illustrated in FIGURE 4 of the

drawings. One or more liner wall slots 25 of selected number, length and width are provided in the liner wall 22 to facilitate air communication between the liner interior 26 and the wall annulus 29. A liner flange 23 extends around the top periphery of the liner wall 22 and fits over the container flange 4 of the container wall 3 when the liner 21 is fully inserted inside the container 2, to seal the wall annulus 29, space the liner bottom 24 from the container bottom 8 and define and seal the bottom annulus 28, as illustrated in FIGURES 1 and 4 of the drawings. The liner wall 22 and liner bottom 24 of the liner 21 define the liner interior 26 that accommodates a trash bag 31, as further illustrated in FIGURES 1, 2 and 4. The trash bag 31 is conventional in design and includes a flexible or resilient trash bag wall 32, with a trash bag bottom 34, defining a trash bag interior 33 for containing trash, as further illustrated in FIGURE 2.

In operation of the embodiment described above and referring again to FIGURES 2 and 4 of the drawings, under circumstances where it is desired to deploy the trash bag wall 32 and the trash bag bottom 34 of a trash bag 31 against the liner wall 22 of the liner 21 inside the container 2, the lid 5 is typically, but not necessarily, seated on the liner flange 23 to close the liner 21 and the container 2 and the air blower 13 is operated by manipulating the switch 19 to the "on" position. The air blower 13 is typically energized by the batteries 17 and air is caused to flow into the trash bag 31 through the lid openings 5b, if the lid 5 is in place on the container 2, or directly into the trash bag 31, if not air also flows from the liner interior 26 of the liner 21, through the liner wall slots 25 and from the bottom annulus 28 and the wall annulus 29, into the suction opening 14a of the air blower 13. The air continues to flow through the blower discharge opening 15a, to create a vacuum inside the liner 21, between the inside wall of the liner 21 and the flexible, resilient trash bag 31. This vacuum causes the trash bag wall 32 and the trash bag

bottom 34 to fully deploy against the inside liner wall 22 and liner bottom 24, respectively, and facilitate complete filling of the trash bag 31, utilizing the full volume of the trash bag interior 33. After deployment of the trash bag 31 in the liner 21, the switch 19 is turned to the “off” position, or may be alternatively wired to automatically terminate operation of the air blower 13 by use of a timer or the like, with the trash bag 31 remaining in fully deployed configuration inside the liner 21 for filling with trash.

In another embodiment of the invention the air blower 13 is mounted on the container wall 3 of the container 2 as illustrated in FIGURES 5 and 6 of the drawings. In this embodiment the blower suction 14 is secured to the container wall 3 of the container 2 and the suction opening 14a communicates with an opening in the container wall 3 and the wall annulus 29, as illustrated in FIGURE 6 to facilitate operation of the air blower 13 and expelling air from the liner interior 26, the wall annulus 29 and the bottom annulus 28, since the bottom annulus 28 is connected to the wall annulus 29, to fully deploy the trash bag 31 inside the liner 21 in the same manner as illustrated in FIGURES 1 and 4 of the drawings and as described above. Accordingly, under circumstances where the air blower 13 is mounted on the container wall 3 of the container 2 as illustrated in FIGURES 5 and 6 of the drawings, when the switch 19 is manipulated to the “on” position, the air blower 13 is operated to cause air to flow from the liner interior 26, through the liner wall slots 25 and into the wall annulus 29. Air continues to flow from the wall annulus 29 and the connected bottom annulus 28, through the suction opening 14a of the blower suction 14 and from the air blower 13 through the blower discharge opening 15a of the blower discharge 15. Accordingly, a vacuum is generated in the liner 21 and this vacuum causes the trash bag wall 32 to fully deploy against the liner wall 22 of the liner 21 and the trash bag bottom 34 to seat against the liner bottom 24, and allow optimum use of the trash bag interior 33 for

receiving trash. As in the first embodiment of the invention, when the switch 19 is manually turned to the “off” position, or is deployed in “automatic” mode according to the knowledge of those skilled in the art, operation of the air blower 13 is terminated and the trash bag 31 remains deployed in an optimum trash-receiving configuration inside the liner 21 of the vacuum-operated trash receptacle 1.

Referring now to FIGURE 7 of the drawings in a third embodiment of the invention, the blower 13 is mounted on the inside of the lid panel 5a of the lid 5, along with a battery container 16 and batteries 17 and a switch 19, with the blower 13 deployed to eject air from the blower discharge 15 into the trash bag 31 and deploy the trash bag 31 in the container 2 using a perforated liner 21 or one that has no liner flange 23. This liner configuration allows air to flow from around the trash bag 31, through the liner wall slots 25 and from the side annulus 29 at the top thereof, due to the increase in air pressure inside the trash bag 21.

It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the vacuum-operated trash receptacle 1 of this invention is characterized by convenience and flexibility, in that while the container 2 and liner 21 are illustrated as cylindrical in configuration, other cross-sectional configurations, including various polygons, such as a square, hexagon, pentagon and the like, can be utilized to shape the container wall 3 and the corresponding liner wall 22, as well. Furthermore, openings such as variously shaped holes other than the liner wall slots 25 may be provided in the liner wall 22 of the liner 21 to facilitate creation of a vacuum in the liner interior 26 by operation of the air blower 13 or an alternative inflating or pressurizing device or a vacuum pump of choice. In addition, the air blower 13 can be operated by direct current supplied by the batteries 17 or by alternating current, as described, and can be placed at any desired location between the container flange 4 of the container wall 3 and the panel flange 10 at the bottom of the container wall 3, as

well as on the lid 5 and may be sized to handle the air flow from a liner 21 of selected size and volume. as desired. Likewise, the switch 19 can be placed at any desired and convenient location on the container bottom 8, the container wall 3 or on the lid 5, according to the desires of the user.

It will be appreciated that the liner 21 can be sized to fit inside the container 2 snugly or loosely, such that either a bottom annulus 28 or a wall annulus 29 is formed, and the air blower 13 then positioned to locate the blower suction 14 accordingly. In the case of only the bottom annulus 28, an opening or openings (not illustrated) must be provided in the liner bottom 24 to facilitate creation of the desired vacuum in the liner interior 26 of the liner 21.

It will be further appreciated by those skilled in the art that the materials of construction of the container 2 and the liner 21 of the vacuum-operated trash receptacle 1 can be varied, although in a preferred embodiment the container 2 and the liner 21 are constructed of metal or of a plastic material such as polyethylene, polypropylene and the like, in non-exclusive particular, for simplicity and minimum expense in fabrication, weather resistance, lightness of weight and optimum longevity. Furthermore, the container 2 and the liner 21 can be constructed of any desired size to receive standard-sized trash bags 31, according to the knowledge of those skilled in the art.

While the preferred embodiments of the invention have been described above, it will be recognized and understood that various modifications may be made in the invention and the appended claims are intended to cover all such modifications which may fall within the spirit and scope of the invention.

Having described my invention with the particularity set forth above, what is claimed is: